

*Praise him with
timbrel and dance*



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Let the children of Zion . . . praise the Lord’s name in the dance
. . . with the timbrel and harp.

— *Psalms* cxlix, 2-3

The Brahma body (the Sadharan) publishes in its organ odds-and-ends called “Musings on the New Dispensation,”² which are witty but cruel hits against its venerable Parent, the Brahma Samaj that was, and the New Apostolic Church that is — of Babu K.C. Sen. There is a paragraph on a NEW INVENTION which speaks of the:

“Mode of chastising apostasy with love, persecution with prayer, and scoffing with solemn hymns.” Weapon? “Artillery of forgiving love and prayer” as personified in the following lovely and dignified epithets: “deluded renegade,” “wanton blasphemy,” “irreverent scoffing,” “weak-minded brother,” “misguided brother,” etc.

Our esteemed colleague of the *Brahma Public Opinion*, is somewhat unjust. He should bear in mind that these “lovely and dignified epithets” are not at all original with the Āryan apostles of the *New Dispensation*. They are but mild echoes of those so profusely lavished upon each other, in days of old, by their Semitic predecessors, the Apostles Peter and Paul (with whom, we are told, Mr. Sen is on friendly terms and even occasional communication),³ and which have been of late years so strongly revived by our valued friends, the *Padri*-Editors of Dissenterism.

And there is another bit quite as liable to mislead the uninitiated reader and make him regard the venerable *New Dispensation* Church as a branch of the whirling and dancing dervishes of the Mussulmans of Turkey.

PHILOSOPHY OF DANCING — “The minister” asked the Lord’s help, “perpetually to dance and smile.” Believing that a response had been given, he shaved his

¹ *Psalms* cl, 4

² [See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brahmo_Conference_Organisation]

³ [See twin study notes, “Paul an Initiate and founder of Christianity” and “Peter not an Initiate and the enemy of Paul,” in our Buddhas and Initiates Series.]

head, took the vow of poverty, put on *dore kopin*,¹ tied a brass *ghoongoor*² round his ankles, and began to dance. This is the religion of the New Dispensation!

We are sorry to see our witty colleague cast a slur upon one of the oldest and most venerable rites of antiquity. Mystical dancing is a practice hoary with age and pregnant with occult philosophy, and the “Minister” of the New Dispensation has done wisely to adopt it. It can bring him but into closer affinity with, and make him resemble the more, the “man after God’s own heart.” The sweet psalm-singing King David, “danced before the Lord with all his might,” *uncovered* himself “in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants,” promised “to be more vile than this,” to be base even in his “own sight,” and apparently succeeded. It is at this moment, we love to think, that the clairvoyant eye of the Prophet of the *New Dispensation*, after the fashion of Professor Denton’s psychometers, caught sight of the King Psalmist in a retrospective image, performing the circle dance of the Amazons around a priapic image, and thus moved, gave birth to the sweet hymn of the “Mystic Dance.”

. . . Jesus dances, Moses dances. . . . Old King David dances, . . . And with him Janak and Yudhistir. . . .

And why not? The mystics and devotees of nearly every religion and sect have at some time adopted the salutary exercise. There was the “Dance of the Daughters of Shiloh” during the Jewish Mysteries³ and the “Leaping of the prophets of Baal.”⁴ From the Sabaeen dance — denoting the motion of the planets round the sun — down to the American Shakers of Mother Lee, the truly religious bodies found themselves occasionally possessed with Bacchic frenzy. During their religious meetings the Shakers first sing a hymn, then form wide circle around a band of male and female singers, to the music of whom they dance in a solemn rhythm, until “moved by the spirit” they begin prophesying and speak with tongues. Dancing was established as a rite, together with the *kiss of charity*, by the Agapaeists, the venerable members of that primitive Christian institution called the “Agapai” which counted St. Augustine among its influential members. Of these, the too plain-spoken Tertullian, who had belonged to the sect and spoke from experience, said after he had joined the Montanists:⁵ . . . “In the Agapai, the young men lay with their sisters, and wallowed in wantonness and luxury”⁶ Prominent among the modern and highly philosophical dancing sects we may also place that of the Methodist Negro “jumpers” of the United States. The piety and zeal of these humble “descendants of Ham,” during religious service, baffles description and puts the infidel to shame. They have been even known to make frantic efforts to catch at the legs of Jesus, whom they affirm having seen above their heads in all His glory, and so to forcibly bring their Redeemer down

¹ [Undergarment a sadhu may wear upon renouncing the worldly life, with a broader piece of cloth rolled round the hips.]

² [A garland of bells tied around the ankle, played with rhythmic movements of feet, also known as ghungroos.]

³ *Judges* xxi, 21, 23 *et passim*

⁴ *I Kings*, xviii, 26

⁵ [Montanism was an early Christian movement of the late 2nd century, later referred to by the name of its founder, Montanus, but originally known by its adherents as the New Prophecy.]

⁶ [*De jejuniis* (On Fasting), cap. xvii]

to land in their midst; their fury of zeal endowing them with the agility of a *Hanuman* and making them jump in dancing higher than the benches. Then, again, we have the Russian dissenters called *Molokans*¹ and the *Dukhobors*,² two jumping sects, whose elders bring promiscuously together persons of both sexes to dance and pray — disrobed and in utter darkness; who choose their own “Mother Virgin” — the community representing collectively the “Spirit of God”; and who recognize her subsequent first male progeny as Christ, and set aside the female issue as material for future “virgins.” Verily dancing *with, before, and for* “the Lord” is an old institution, and must have been adopted by the Christian sect-founders to avoid the accusation contained in Matthew and Luke: “We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced.”³ Babu Keshub’s *New Dispensation* containing, as we hear, “pipings” from every religion, especially from those of Mohammedanism, and Christianity, whose vow of poverty and sacrament it has adopted, did not, of course, wish to be outdone by Dervishes, Shakers and Negro-Methodists. Let the Grihastha-Bairagis of the Calcutta Church, by all means “go forth in the dances of them that make merry.” They have our Theosophical blessing.

Following is the text unabridged of the New Dispensation’s Hymn of the “Mystic Dance,” as we find it in the organ of that sect, and which we will venture to call — A COTILLION OF SAINTS.

[These verses have been omitted]

In short, the whole company of the apostles and martyrs in the various “heavenly mansions” seem to have been bitten by the tarantula. Our European and American members will perhaps sigh to think that in so promiscuous a quadrille of saints and sinners — there should have been no room for the “*atheistic* Theosophical Society.” Is it, we wonder, because the Bengal Psalmist thought it would be straining metaphor too far to picture such thoughtful and sedate persons as moving in “the mazy” and “tripping it on the light fantastic toe”?⁴



¹ [Russian *молокане*, sectarian Christians who evolved from “Spiritual Christian” Russian peasants that refused to obey the Russian Orthodox Church.]

² [Russian *Духоборы*, literally “Spirit-Wrestlers,” one of the sects — later defined as a religious philosophy, ethnic group, social movement, or simply a “way of life” — known generically as Spiritual Christianity.]

³ [*Matthew* xi, 17; *Luke* vii, 32. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

⁴ *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, III pp. 203-6